9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

CHAPTER II.

HOW IRELAND TOOK SHAPE.

101
131 "To comprehend the homestead and its home-folk, from the thatch of the roof to the colour of the children's hair, we must find the locality on the domed surface of the earth, and must realize that this earth is a very large and dominant region round it." So wrote the late Grenville Cole, wisest of Ireland's geographers. This island, then, lies in the warm waters of the Atlantic Ocean, midway between the Lofoten Islands and the Straits of Gibraltar, a detached but not isolated fragment of the drowned coast of Eurasia. Throughout the ages, as Europe sank repeatedly under the waters of the ocean, this outer margin, worn down by rains and rivers, received fresh marine deposits over and over again, so that its rocks record all the main features of the history of western Europe.

133
175 Lying in the middle latitudes of the continent, it shares the converging mountain systems of north and south, the older axis of Scandinavia dominating the build of the north of Ireland while the younger axis linked with France and Spain prevails in the south. The lead thus given in the remote ages of geology has been followed, over and over again, by man and his cultures converging on this last outpost of Europe. From across the Atlantic, too, Ireland has received much in recent centuries; here the alien potato was first welcomed; and it was the "praty" which drove masses of Irishmen back along the route it had itself taken. "Ireland lieth aloof in

[p. 15]
[p. 14 is blank]

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

121 The inquiry was conducted on almost exactly the same lines as that of last year; the slight differences of method being either due to changes made as the result of former experience or to local causes; but every effort was made to ensure as great uniformity as possible, a matter of much importance as facilitating comparison of results.

In this report the same headings as used in the previous one, and arranged in the same order, have been adhered to as closely as possible, so as to allow of easy reference.

II.—Physiography of the Islands.

131 The two islands under consideration, together with several small uninhabited islets, form the parish of Inishbofin; they are situated 101 outside the mouth of Killary Bay, and are distant some thirty-six miles from Westport, and about sixteen miles from Clifden, Co. Galway, the nearest town of any size. The post town is Cleggan, a small village on a point of the mainland, about seven miles from Inishbofin. Of the two main islands Inishbofin (locally called Bofin or Boffin) is much the larger, as out of the total area of the parish of 3151 acres, it contains 2312.

133 Its greatest length is about four miles, and it varies in breadth from half a mile to over two miles. The nature of its coast line is greatly varied; at some places, as at Knock-quarter or East End, being low and sandy; at others, as on the north side, and at Dun More on the western extremity, being rocky, at times rising into high and jagged cliffs worn into coves and natural bridges; while, again, in other places it is high bluff overhanging a shingly foreshore. The [504] harbour is very safe and well sheltered, and looks S.W. The coast of Shark, which lies about a mile S.W. of Inishbofin, is much more rocky, and may be said to be precipitous nearly all round, and much broken into by caves and deep fissures a few yards wide, with precipitous overhanging walls. It is difficult to land on this island if the weather be at all rough, and the inhabitants are often stormbound for weeks at a time. The difficulty and danger of landing is not so great [653] as it used to be since the building of a new pier by the Government as a relief work in 1892. Mr. Michael Lavelle, writing about the natives of this island, says:—"It is very hard for these people to live; they may be two months before they can go to Boffin to get some commands, and they live during that time on potatoes and 'white wine.'"

The principal rock of both islands is gneiss, but belts of steatite are also found.

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

121 barony of Erris, county Mayo. It was at first intended that only the Parish of Kilmore, including the peninsula known as the Mullet (or Erris proper) and the Inishkea Islands should be undertaken, but unusual facilities for working the isolated district of Portacloy presenting themselves, it also was included in the inquiry.

The circumstances under which the work was carried on differed considerably from those experienced on the two previous occasions, the field being wider and the people more scattered; but the same methods were adhered to as far as possible, and this report has been drawn up on the same lines as its predecessors, in order to facilitate comparison and reference.

II.—Physiography.

131 101 631 The district dealt with in this Paper consists of two distinct localities, one clearly defined, the parish of Kilmore, the other more indefinite in its boundaries, being a tract of wild mountainous country around the little hamlet of Portacloy; both form part of the barony of Erris, in the extreme north-west of the Co. Mayo.

133 Kilmore includes the Mullet peninsula, the inhabited islands of North and South Inishkea, Duvillaun and Eagle Island, and a considerable number of uninhabited islets, the most remarkable of which is Inisglora (Inis Gluaire). The Mullet, or Erris proper, is a long narrow strip of land, nearly cut off from the mainland, as it is bounded on the east or landward side by Broadhaven and the magnificent Bay of Blacksod, some forty-five square miles in area, the only connection with the rest of Erris being by a narrow isthmus, about 200 yards in width. The peninsula runs nearly north and south; its extreme length is about fifteen miles, and its width varies from about seven miles in the northern part to less than half a mile near its southern extremity. The total area of the parish, including the islands, is 29,492 acres, or about 46 square miles.

The coast line, in the northern portion, consists mainly of high cliffs, indented by deep coves with precipitous and often overhanging walls, and in places pierced by caves and natural bridges. This precipitous coast extends from Broadhaven, on the north-east, round to Annagh Head on the west, a distance, following the coast line, of about thirty miles, the cliffs rising in many places to above 300 feet, and affording only three inlets of any size. Blind Harbour, on the [504] north (200 acres in area, nearly all dry at low water), and Frenchport and Scotchport on the west, the others are either inaccessible from the land side or only practicable for curraghs. Erris Head forms the

167 657 landscape combined with financial help of such varied forms that one may see the welfare state in action. Inishbofin, four miles beyond the coast of Connemara (10° 10′ W. to 10° 15′ W.), is separated by a strait almost one mile wide from the nearest inhabited island, Inishark. Some of the neighboring 311 small uninhabited islands are useful sheep pastures and others merely reefs 132 dangerous to shipping. In calm weather these islands rise above deep clear waters, but in storms Atlantic waves send spray to a height of 300 feet and more[5] and a dangerous swell sweeps through intricate channels. The inhabitants, farmers and farmer-fishermen are at the mercy of the weather. In 1954 the dry spring resulted in a short growth of oats and barley straw and a feeble growth of potatoes; the fishermen's lobster pots were swept out to sea, replaced and then swept out again; and the hookers could not be taken out in waters always dangerous but vastly more so when the weather consists of an apparently endless series of deep depressions.

505 Isolation is a major problem, but on four days a week in summer and three days a week in winter a hooker runs from the pier at Cleggan to the island, where it is rarely able to berth at the pier, so that all passengers and goods must be put over the side into a curragh and rowed ashore. In winter the island may be storm-bound for as much as a fortnight at a time, and almost [261] every household has a bag of meal kept for such an emergency. Special arrangements have to be made for the shipment of cattle; fish can be taken for sale to the mainland in rowing boats only during favorable weather; and no eggs are sold owing to transport problems [137]

[5] On the cliffs of the island the vegetation is halophytic and consists generally of a low sward of seapink (*Psamma maritima*).

[p. 203(A)]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

133
635
131
102

FIG. 2. The Provinces of Ireland.

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date)1910-12
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

COLLECTANEA.

A Folklore Survey of County Clare.

(With Plate XI.[1]).

131 63 County Clare from the fourth century of our era was united politically with North Munster, Tuath Mumhain, or Thomond, though separated from it by the broad waters of the Shannon. Standing thus by itself, "isolated by the Sea, the River, and the enmity of Connaught," it might be expected that it would preserve until modern times an unbroken tradition from the prehistoric past, and that a survey of its folklore would show many traces of ancient beliefs still surviving. The battle goddess *Catabodva*, 776 worshipped in antique Gaul, appears as the *Bodbh* of battle 787 (*cath*) in the wars fought by the Princes of Clare in 1014 and 1317, and the spirit that washed the bloodstained clothes and limbs of the then living combatants still, I was told three years ago, foretells calamity by washing clothes in the same waters.[2] *Plists* or water snakes,—emblems, perhaps, of pagan islanders or devouring seas and lakes,—abound in the legends of a very early date, and are still reputed to seize the cattle, and even human 121 beings, drowned in the lakes of Clare. The place names considered below will show to what an extent our present nomen- 124 clature records the mythology and sagas of early days, and I propose in the remainder of this first paper to deal with the banshee, the death coach, and the fairies. The bulk of the traditions

[1] This plate of the Ancient Parishes of County Clare has been kindly lent by the Council of the Royal Irish Academy, and appears in their *Proceedings*, S. III., vol. iv.

[2] Cf. the *lavandières de nuit*, discussed by Sébillot, *Le Folk-lore de France*, Tome iii.

[p. 180]

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

Introduction

101
131
105
178
[162]

INIS BEAG is a fictitious name for one of the many inhabited islands of the Irish Gaeltacht.[1] It is a rocky, barren protuberance in the ocean, buffeted constantly by wind and storm, where 350 hardy people eke out a meager existence. This tiny island is renowned not only for the distinctive folk culture possessed by its inhabitants, but for its numerous, well-preserved antiquities which attest to at least 5000 years of almost continuous human habitation, and its great beauty of land and seascape. During the past 150 years, first scientists, then writers, and more recently film, radio, and television producers have visited Inis Beag, and their many works have served to familiarize the world with the culture, albeit romanticized,

[291]
[241]
[501]
[197]

of the islanders. As a result of literary publicity, which commenced in the first decade of this century, increasing numbers of tourists have been drawn to Inis Beag over the years. The cultural forms which are most publicized and attract the most attention from tourists are the traditional garb of the folk, their skill in rowing the famed canoe, called *curach*, the manner in which they manufacture soils and grow in them a variety of crops, and their Gaelic speech.

114
121
127

My wife and I were introduced to Inis Beag during a short visit to Ireland in 1955, when we viewed the island from the nearby coast and talked of its cultural past and present with scholars in Dublin, Cork, and Galway. Between 1955 and 1958, we immersed ourselves in writings pertaining to Irish history and culture, and during the three summer months of the latter year we visited several peasant communities on the mainland and three islands, including Inis Beag, of the Gaeltacht. We made plans to come back to Inis Beag as soon as possible to undertake research, and in 1959 and 1960 we were able to spend the greater part of a year there, during which time we visited briefly on three occasions a neighboring island—Inis Thiar[2]—and several institutions on the mainland to conduct library and other research. We returned eight times to Inis Beag and Dublin for

131
197
162
103
192

[1] The Gaeltacht—areas in which 25 to 100 percent of the inhabitants speak Irish—embraces portions of 12 northern, western, and southern counties and a population of approximately 600,000 people (Freeman 1960:166).

[2] In Gaelic, Inis Thiar (also a fictitious name) means Western Isle, and Inis Beag is translated Little Isle.

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

175 [702] [648] The castle and watch tower still dominate the Inis Beag skyline, and the latter serves as a landmark for fishermen posting their nets. Another landmark, at the southeast tip of the island, is a 110-feet-high lighthouse built during the 1850s.

175 173 731 244 Written sources and local traditions disagree as to the effects of the great famine on Inis Beag. Some observers claim that the potato blight completely destroyed island crops, and the folk were forced to depend on secondary agricultural commodities, livestock, fish, and limpets in order to survive; conversely, others maintain that the blight did not penetrate the island until much later. According to my Inis Beag respondents, the blight did contaminate some gardens, but enough [457] were spared so that the islanders were not greatly inconvenienced. In fact, potatoes [161] were exported by some farmers to help feed starving mainlanders. Between 1841 and 1851, the population of Inis Beag increased by 62 persons, at a time when [167] most other Irish communities had dwindling populations. The first record of substantial emigration from the island, mostly to the United States, was in 1822.

Contemporary Setting

131 Inis Beag has a northeast to southwest topographical axis, at right angles to its geological axis, and is a mile and three-quarters in length and a quarter of a [161] mile less in width. A population of 350 persons inhabits four villages, and the [361] island comprises 1440 acres. When giving directions informally, the folk refer to [823] the beach side as the north side and the back of the island bordering the Atlantic as the south side; then, the sound separating Inis Beag from Inis Thiar becomes the west side, and the sound between Inis Beag and the mainland the east side. I will follow this practice when describing various geographical and other features 133 in this chapter. Between the mainland and Inis Beag, a reef extending from the island far out into the east sound is a menace to shipping; it was on this reef within 200 yards of the shore that the freighter ran aground in 1960.

133 311 A large beach and a contiguous stretch of common land, which together make up over 200 of the island's 1440 acres, dominate the north side of Inis Beag. The beach is known as the "strand," following English usage, and lies west and north of the common land, about midway between the sounds (see Figs. 4, 9, and 10). It is thought that several hundred years ago arable land existed where the common land does today, and the strand was very narrow; but gradually sand accumulated, widening the beach and burying more and more farm land as it crept eastward. If one examines the Ordnance Survey Maps of 1841 and 1902, the slow encroachment of the sand can be noted. The common land was about half its present size in 1841, and 60 years later almost 70 acres of cultivable soil had been engulfed. The tops of fences projecting above the surface at the present time attest to the shifting of the sand, as does the buried church of the patron saint, and sand now threatens fertile plots on the east side of the island.

[361] There are six major and several minor terraces in Inis Beag, of which the lower two underlie the strand, the common land, and two of the four villages. The lower terraces are broad and the upper ones narrow and precipitous, while weather-

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

complain about how difficult their new work regime is when compared to the old. Young men are chided by their elders, as well as by their wives, about how much less they labor today than did their forerunners and womenfolk. One of the most popular conversational themes among old men is the contrast between generations—how much stronger and more industrious those of the "hero breed" (a term favored by Mullen [1936] in describing Irish islanders of the past) living half a century ago were than men are nowadays. Women are provoked by how vociferously their spouses complain of the difficulty and endlessness of their labor, and yet how little initiative and industry they exhibit and how often they are idle. "Light work" or no work at all is customary on days when the steamer calls, when it rains heavily, on the day an islander dies and two days afterward, on Sundays and holydays of obligation, and at other times, contrary to the state of affairs which prevailed in the past.

Several men admitted to me their guilt about not working more often and energetically, and told me that many of their fellows "talk big" but do not match their words with deeds. All of them questioned the need for maintaining traditional patterns of labor in light of the many supports to the economy provided by the government. One candid islander suggested that a factory be constructed in Inis Beag which would employ all of the men two to four hours each morning—"Then people would have a steady income and a lot of time off. Now it is hard to get up in the morning and decide what to do, and by noon you are just reaching a decision." An even franker man, of the oldest generation, was unwilling to agree with his peers about how hard they had worked when young. He was willing to acknowledge that now "times are easier," but that when he was a youth men often were idle and were chided by their elders and felt guilty. Interestingly, he was aware of the phenomenon of primitivism, which he described as "the romantic notions writers have about us."

Land Ownership

Inis Beag comprises a townland of four 256-acre quarters, called "carrows." Other land units are the half-quarter, the "cartron" of 64 acres, the half-cartron, the fourth or "croggery" of 16 acres, the half-croggery, the acre, and the three-quarter, half-, and quarter-acre. I have mentioned already that the total acreage of the island is 1440, the strand and common land together make up 200 acres, and the initial division of land among the local inhabitants probably was accomplished by a landlord late in the seventeenth century. Approximately 1000 acres are owned by the Irish Land Commission today and rented to 57 landholders, while two other properties have been purchased from the commission and thus are owned privately. The acreage not accounted for represents shore areas which are useless for agricultural and grazing purposes. Rent is charged according to the fourth and is 5 shillings[1] per year at the present time.

The quarters of Inis Beag extend southward in roughly parallel fashion from the four villages, and each landholder possesses numerous fields, ranging in

[1] A shilling is the equivalent of 14 cents and a pound $2.80 in United States currency.

17: Messenger E-4,5 (1958-1966)1971 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inis Beag

JOHN C. MESSENGER

which contain a large portion of the natural flora—herbs and shrubs—of the island. Stone fences delimit many hundreds of plots which compose most of the two-square-mile land surface of Inis Beag.

The island boasts a post office with radio-telephone facilities, a "national school" in which three teachers instruct ninety pupils in the seven "standards," two provision shops with attached "pubs," a former coast guard station now housing the nurse and a knitting industry which employs local girls, a lighthouse, and a chapel served by a curate who resides nearby. Inis Beag lacks electricity and running water, and the only vehicles are several ass-drawn carts which are able to travel the narrow, fence-bordered trails. A small "steamer" carrying supplies, passengers, and mail to and from a mainland port visits the island at least once each week. That Inis Beag has experienced far less cultural change than other island communities of Ireland is largely due to the fact that, in absence of a deep water quay, the steamer has had to stand off the strand and be met by "canoes." Most of the tourists who come to the island stay only for the hours that the steamer is anchored and go ashore mainly for the thrill of riding in the canoes, which the island men row with consummate skill. Insofar as I can discover, the inhabitants of Inis Beag are less prone to visit the mainland than are the peoples of other Irish islands.

INIS BEAG
HISTORY AND CULTURE[2]

The prehistory and history of Inis Beag are recorded dramatically in a multitude of monuments and artifacts of stone and metal, including Neolithic axe-heads and kitchen middens, Copper-Bronze Age gallery grave tombs and burial mounds of earth and stone, an Iron Age promontory fort, and medieval Christian monasteries, churches, cemeteries, stone houses, and a sacred well, as well as a three-story tower house built by the political overlords of the island. Irish nativists claim that the contemporary folk are lineal descendants of ancient, once civilized

[2] The culture described herein is that of 1959–1960 and excludes important changes which have occurred since then, such as those resulting from the introduction of television, a summer language school for pupils from the mainland, and free secondary education.